

Memoirs of Old Astoria--1883-1954

By August Hildebrand, Historian

Astoria, Oregon, June 1954

The following story and obituary notice
appeared in the Astorian-Budget May 28th and 29th

Resident Here 77 Years, Dies

Mrs. Annie Cecelia Leathers, 79, a resident of Astoria for the past 77 years, died in a local hospital Wednesday. She had been in failing health for the past three months.

Born on April 3, 1875, in San Francisco, she came with her parents to Astoria as a child of two years. She received her elementary education in Astoria and was graduated from the Oregon College of Education in 1897. Following her schooling, she taught school in Grays River, Chadwell, Westport and in the Alderbrook school in Astoria.

Mrs. Leathers was voted the most popular young woman of Astoria in 1900 and crowned Miss Astoria of that year. She was married in Astoria, August 23, 1905, to Richard Marshall Leathers, partner in the pioneer boat building firm of Leathers Brothers. He was chairman of the Astoria Regatta in 1906. Leathers died in 1908.

She was very active in church and civic work in Astoria, being a member of the St. Mary Star of the Sea church, the St. Martha Altar Society, Oregon College of Education Alumni

Association and the Historical society.

Surviving her are a son, Richard Marshall Leathers, Astoria; grandson, Richard Marshall Leathers III, Astoria; a niece, May Lions, and a nephew, Benjamin Leathers.

Additional information regarding services, which are planned for Wednesday morning will be announced by the Hughes-Ransom mortuary. She will lie in state at the St. Mary's hospital until Sunday and then will lie in state at her home 645 Exchange.

ANNIE CECELIA LEATHERS

Services for Mrs. Annie Cecelia Leathers, prominent Astorian, who had resided here for 77 years, will be held at the St. Mary's Catholic church Wednesday at 10 a.m. The Very Rev. Robert Neugebauer, pastor of the church, will be celebrant of solemn requiem high mass. Burial will be in Mount Calvary cemetery, Portland, with committal services there at 4 p.m.

The recital of the Rosary will be held Monday at 8 p.m. at the family home at 645 Exchange street by the Rev. John Sheridan.

Serving as casketbearers will be David Waterhouse, Mark Haynes, John Osburn, Guyon Blisssett, Bill Van Dusen and John Trullinger.

ONE BY ONE THE LEAVES ARE FALLING ONE BY ONE THE ROSES FADE!

When one thinks of Life of the Human, the Heartstrings are touched when one loses the companionship, the acquaintanship, the social touch with one who, in the circle of one's observance, has passed on into the unknown.

Since I first met ANNIE O'NEIL LEATHERS my thoughts have been with her as she was one of the many within my circle of age and association.

Kinney's Cannery with its vast piles of large Chinook Salmon, with its immense stacks of the canned product, the busy Orientals, the vast fleet of Columbia River sailboats, are ever traveling in ones mind, especially now as memories of the Olden and Golden days reoccur with the passing of

ANNIE O'NEIL LEATHERS

She was a person of a different past, nationality and different religious environment to my own—and yet the human attraction unmistakably was there as wanting to strive for a human understanding of the races.

When we notice the antagonistic tendencies of today, of different entities to the teaching that true Christianity offers to the Human of good will, one shudders as to the future of our decedents.

ANNIE O'NEIL LEATHERS

Had that calm disposition to let the other one worry about it. In her young years, labeling cans of Salmon in Kinney's Cannery, my respect rose for her, as I realized she wanted to ease the struggle of existence for widowed Mother.

Manual labor, shrewd investments and the blessings of the Almighty favored her and her future husband. The blessings of the Almighty was the natural result of correct doings, that should be remembered by her decedents.

From the modest house of old, widowed lady O'Neil, on the pebbly beach at the foot of 4th and 5th Street (Now the Standard Oil Property)—with nearby Boat Shops of Marshall Leathers and his brother, manufacturing the famous Columbia River sailboats with their unique centerboards (as differing from the European side wings) that bobbed up advisingly that threatening river sandbars were near and Shoalwater Bay Oyster Plungers . . . to the original Leathers' Home, 15th and Exchange near St. Mary's Hospital (on the Old Fort Astoria site) . . . around which Marshall Leathers Sr., himself built an artificial stone wall . . . a wall that I witnessed him building and that stood the ravages of time . . . and

The Ocean House and The Gearhart Hotel in co-partnership with the late K. Osborn family, and numerous other real estate, is an accumulation of wealth that is not duplicated in many families or locations.

The famous, world renowned American orator, Russel H. Convell, a Baptist, who interpreted passages of the Bible to their true meaning, lectured twice in Astoria, in the then Congregation Church (now the Citadel of the Salvation Army) I attended both lectures. One of the lectures was "Acres of Diamonds." I thought that "diamonds" may be picked up in one's back yard. No need of going to the end of the world and other pastures. The O'Neil family, the Marshall Leathers family and the K. Osborn family apparently heeded this advice.

During my early days I associated much with the late K. Osborn, a man of sterling character. I profitted by his advice.

These were the days of Orators. Besides Convell, Henry Ward Beecher, Jennings Bryan, Skopes, Douglas, Daniel De Leon and many others tried to sway humanity to their way of thinking. Torchlight processions highlighted the occasion, Republicans and Democrats. As a boy, with many other youngsters, I may have been found in both processions with a "Hip-Hip-Hurrah" shout, yet trying to fathom the noblest endeavors of their organizations.

Those were the days of the famous, numerous Columbia River Sailboats coming from the lower part of the river, with their fair weather Gaff sails set, aided by an incoming tide, sometimes beating the gas powered boats of Fox Brothers, Jensen the inventor and Nelson Troyer of the old Astoria Iron Works, to deliver their catch to the many canneries (strung from Smith's Point to Tongue Point) in Astoria, laden with the finest fish on earth . . . and so, the passing of ANNIE O'NEIL LEATHERS conjured

In my mind, in a kaleidoscopic manner, pleasant memories of old Astoria.

Old Astoria with its wooden houses and streets, built over the ever rushing waters of the Columbia, on piles. Astoria with its Chinese quarter, thronged with about 3000 Orientals. Chinese with their Manchu hair braids which the bad white urchins were teasingly tempted to pull. Chinese ladies with their, to them very fashionable, foot bound tight shoes and panties, hobbling swayingly along the best they could.

Chinatown with its highbinder societies, with its Opium, its Oriental eatables, Joss candlelight altars, its Oriental music and smell. Not forgetting the large Chinese dragon paraded in Astoria nor the celebrating of Chinese New Year with its noisy, exploding fire crackers.

Speaking of white ladies' fashions of those days . . . the hoop skirt crenolines were a thing of the past but the wasplike waists, the prominent bustles and the large Merry Widow hats were a very fashionable "must" for the white female population.

**YES! OLD ASTORIA HAS A PAST—
A GLORIOUS PAST:
MAY GOD BLESS IT . . . TO HAVE
A GLORIOUS FUTURE!**

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF ARTS

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